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SEBASTIAN STROME.

BY JULIAN HAWTHORNE.

CHAPTER IX. DISCUSSIONS.

It was snowing when Strome and Smillet emerged from the Mulberry Club, and set their faces towards the Strand. Strome walked fast, causing his short-legged companion to exert himself to the utmost to keep up with him. There were several questions which Smillet was anxious to ask, but his attempts to do so were for the present unavailing. His voice, never very powerful, was now deprived of what strength it ordinarily had by lack of breath; and even when he contrived to chirp out a sentence or two, Strome, the lower part of whose face was wrapped up in his muffler, either seemed not to hear, or answered only by a smile and a shake of the head. Thus it happened that, during all the inclement journey from the club to Strome's lodgings, the solicitude of Smillet remained unpeased.

Mrs. Blister, the widow who looked after Strome's home interests, and was sincerely devoted thereto, had had the forethought to build up a comfortable fire against his return. She was not unaccustomed to his remaining away all night, but, though she was a lady of rather a religious turn of mind, she never appeared to doubt that his absences were in some good and holy cause. As an embryo clergyman, no less than as a pleasant-spoken and gentlemanly young man, she always approached him in a reverent, if not devout attitude, and cited him to her acquaintance as an example of unworldliness and virtue. She was a neat, noiseless, half-blind little woman, with a soft caressing voice that lingered and hesitated over the sibilants. She had begun

life as lady's-maid in a nobleman's family; and perhaps it was during the hours daily spent in combing and brushing her mistress's hair, that she acquired this soothing habit of speech—a species of refinement on the hissing of an ostler. Such, at any rate, was Strome's theory on the subject.

"Sit down, Thomas!" exclaimed the host heartily, as he ushered his guest into the room. "Dilate yourself upon that sofa, while I summon the nectar and ambrosia from the cupboard. A drop of cognac wouldn't be a bad idea on an occasion like this. *Nunc est bibendum!*"

Strome was in one of his fantastic humours. He stepped briskly about, humming to himself, and paying no attention to his guest's remarks. His face had regained its normal colour, and he no longer showed the need of sleep. He still appeared excited, but his excitement was of a different kind from that of the early morning. It did not seek relief in outbreaks of exultation, and there was no tremor in it. The brandy having been put between them on the table, he drank off a small glass of it to Smillet's good health; then threw himself back in his chair, folded his arms, and stretched out his legs.

"I should think you'd be hungry," remarked Smillet.

"I daresay Mrs. Blister will think the same, Thomas; and presently you will see her appear, and after a prolonged apology for her intrusion, entreat to know whether I wouldn't perhaps like to take a little s-something to eat—anything I would name she would be s-so pleased to procure for me. Admirable woman, Mrs. Blister: I believe the wisest thing I could do, after all, would be to marry her, retire from this trivial and deceitful world, and spend the

remainder of my existence cosily in her chimney corner. I should be well taken care of. Ha, ha! Why don't you say, 'Strome, how you do go on?'"

As Smillet made no rejoinder, the other continued: "Yes; I feel that my liberty is in danger—that the widow will have me sooner or later unless I escape, and so—so I have decided to leave her, Thomas; to give up my rooms, dispose of my furniture, and go elsewhere. What do you think of that plan?"

"Go to Dene Hall, I suppose you mean?"

"You are too matter-of-fact, Thomas: you're always for clipping the wings of my imagination. Now I had imagined myself going to Rome, and entering the College of Jesuits, and becoming the confidential friend and adviser of His Holiness Pio Nono. Did you ever meet that sublime old gentleman?"

"Any one would think you were a Jesuit already to hear you talk, upon my word they would!" exclaimed Smillet with indignant plaintiveness. "I never saw the pope, and I don't want to see him. I consider your father is a much more sublime old gentleman than he is."

Strome clenched his teeth, and his voice changed. "Do me the favour not to allude to my father again to-day, or to-morrow either, if I should happen to see you to-morrow. I won't have his name dragged into whatever nonsense I choose to talk with fools: I wish you to keep that in mind, Smillet, if you please!"

Smillet arose, manifestly hurt. "I don't think you've any right to speak that way to a fellow," he said. "I'll go, if you like. Of course I know that you're a great deal more of a man than I am, but that doesn't give you a right to insult a fellow. Of course I couldn't mean any disrespect to your father—you know that!"

"I beg your pardon, Smillet! I hope you won't go! I don't want to be alone to-day!" Strome said, putting unusual emphasis on each sentence. "A man who has been up all night is never quite himself, you know. Only, when I feel—as I generally do feel—I don't like to be reminded of him, that's all!"

Smillet did not possess the faculty of bearing malice; he was not of sufficient consequence in his own eyes. He, therefore, before Strome had finished speaking, not only forgot that he had been insulted, but was sensible of nothing save concern for his friend. He stood hesitatingly in front of him, fumbling with his eye-glass.

"Can I do anything, old fellow?" he asked. "Is anything wrong, I mean? I've felt as if there was, all the morning. Did Fawley——?"

"Fawley, indeed! Ha, ha! Fawley did his best, you may be sure; but I hope my Thomas doesn't imagine that Fawley can play piquet as well as I can! Majora canamus. I was talking about becoming a Jesuit."

"Oh, bother the Jesuits!" exclaimed Smillet, resuming his seat.

"I wouldn't advise you to attempt it! I'll preach you a sermon about them. They are the only body of men who have ever realised the true uses of religion. It is the means by which wise men acquire dominion over fools. Men are governed through their fears, physical or metaphysical. But physical fear postulates superior physical strength in whomsoever inspires it; now it is evident that one man cannot be stronger than two or three other men at the utmost. But one man armed with metaphysical terrors can frighten the life out of whole nations, with kings and emperors at their head."

"That's not Christianity though," objected Smillet stoutly. "Christianity says that men are to be ruled by love."

"Perhaps they are to be; but not while you and I are alive, Thomas. Besides, men's affections are fickle, but their poltroonery is constant. Furthermore, as I should wish to be the ruler, I am more concerned about him than about the other fellows. Now the pleasure of ruling by fear can never become insipid; it gratifies my self-esteem, and I am continually amused at seeing what lengths of folly the fools will go; whereas nothing palls on one so quickly as being loved—assuming, for argument's sake, that anybody ever loved anybody except himself."

"Pooh! it isn't so at all, and you know it!" squeaked the hearer resentfully.

"Power—absolute power! and endless intellectual entertainment. Gratification of the senses, too—what is there so beautiful, for instance, as the rich elaborate Catholic ritual? I tell you, Thomas, that civilisation has invented nothing so complete and satisfactory as this Church of Rome; nothing so flattering to the higher instincts of a man's mind; nothing even so stimulating and alluring to his lower instincts, if he chooses to indulge them. And of that Church Jesuitism is the flower. I feel that I was fore-ordained to be the chief of the order!"

"Anybody would think you were living two hundred years ago! Jesuits don't amount to anything nowadays!"

"The more reason why I should restore them to their ancient pre-eminence. The grand principle remains; it needs only to be adapted to new conditions. Mankind are just as silly and just as cowardly now as they were in Loyola's time: they must be scared with a differently-dressed bogey, that's all. I shall know how to manage. I shall begin with converting the Established Church—or rather, with making them admit that they were converted long ago. Then I will be the Richelieu of England!"

As Strome spoke thus, grasping the arms of his chair with his hands, his shoulders thrown back and his head lifted, he looked brilliant and ardent, and not like a materialist. Smillet, in his moderate way, felt—not for the first time, nor for the fiftieth—that his friend was possessed of great powers and talents; but he also had a perception of the weak place in his armour, and with his usual blunt acuteness he put his finger directly upon it.

"You'd better begin with converting yourself, I should think! You don't really believe a bit of all that stuff; and I never saw you in earnest about anything—unless it were about winning Fawley's money. You were savage on that point."

"Well," said the other laughingly, "it has always been a set-to between the Jew and me, ever since I first found him out. But there's something in that remark of yours. It's difficult to feel much in earnest about anything except one's enmities. The surest way to succeed in the world is to be at war with it."

"Oh, come, you'd better say outright that you don't believe there's such a thing as a good man in existence: I would if I were you!" exclaimed Smillet, expanding his nostrils with a very palpable sneeze.

Strome laughed again at first, but his face soon became grave. "No, I won't gratify you so far as that!" he said presently. "I do know one good man—what you mean by good. If the Established Church were made up of such men as he, then such men as I would be put to shame—and to our wits' end. I don't reverence what he reverences, but I reverence him. I can't catechise him or account for him. The more he loves me and believes in me and rejoices in me, the more he makes me feel what a flimsy scamp I am. I stand in awe of that simple old saint. He wouldn't be a bishop. If he were to

stand up in the pulpit of one of our gorgeous high churches, I have a notion that all the gold, and silver, and colours, and embroidery, and tapers, and intoning, would appear as dust and ashes and senseless gibberish. Ah, Thomas Smillet, I tell you the thought of him has often spoilt my fun. If I thought there were many like him in the world, I should lose my self-confidence and give up. I shall never feel comfortable so long as he is alive. Strange freak of destiny that this man—of all men in the world—should be the father of me!"

"Since it has become allowable to mention him, do you mean that you want him out of the way so that you may be comfortable?"

Strome turned and looked at his companion with something of admiration in his gaze. "You deserve another nip of brandy for that question!" said he at length. "It's a flight of sardonic humour that nobody but you would have thought of. I confess I never happened to look at the matter in that light before. Humph! no. I don't profess philanthropy, Thomas, and yet I love my kind so well that to give them the benefit of his society for another week, say, I'd be only too happy to sign a receipt for the thirty or forty more years that may still be owing to me. However, this is all talk and affectation, and you are quite justified, my dear mentor, in manifesting your contempt and incredulity." He was silent a few moments, and then, with an uneasy movement, straightened himself in his chair and poured some brandy into his glass. "Confound that suggestion of yours—it was infernal! it has made me feel cold!" he murmured, drinking the liquor with a shudder. "He is well—in perfect health: he will last for five-and-twenty years more at least. Bah! if I were superstitious, now— Well, I am superstitious! 'Want him out of the way!' In all my ministerial career, Smillet, I shall never preach a sermon so short and so effective as that. I wish you'd kept it behind your teeth!"

"Why, it was you suggested it, you know," said Smillet, yawning amiably. "I didn't mean anything by it. Of course I was only in fun!"

Strome made no rejoinder, but settled down into a heavy silence, from which no efforts of his companion sufficed to arouse him; and Smillet, after having with difficulty elicited some half-dozen monosyllabic replies, most of them inapt, subsided into taciturnity himself; and insomuch as, with

him, not to speak was nearly the same as not to think, it came about that within half an hour Smillet was sound asleep, and snoring with as much soundness as if it had been his first indulgence of the kind that day.

When Strome's ears were saluted with this not unfamiliar sound, he inhaled and emitted a long breath, and insensibly adopted a more relaxed posture. He had not wished to be alone, but he was glad, nevertheless, that the conscious presence of his friend was for a time removed from him. He had all his life been subject to fits of depression, which did not ordinarily last long, but which were none the less deep while they did last. During the past night and morning he had undergone strong excitement, and it was no more than natural that he should now feel a reaction therefrom. There were many things for him to think about, and very few—perhaps none—that could afford him pleasure in the thinking. Nor was the mere thinking the worst part; he would have to act and to suffer, and that speedily. It was a gloomy outlook. For the moment, he doubted whether it were worth his while to fight through it. He had already fought vigorously enough, and had been worsted at all points save one; and even as regarded that one, it might turn out that it would have been better had he been defeated too. Or suppose luck were to change, and he were to become as successful as he was now the reverse, what substantial good would that do him? It would not bring him content, nor repose. He must enter the lists again, if only for the sake of distraction. And so it must go on till the end. How far off was that end? Why not say it should be now? Was the highest gratification that life had thus afforded him to be weighed against its disappointments? By no means! Well, then—

"Come, come, this is mere affectation!" said Strome to himself, folding his arms. "I don't really mean to commit suicide. Besides, it would be too tame an ending; and out of character, too—out of the character that I have played before the world. I should be laughed at; and I couldn't kill myself dead enough not to hear that laughter! Would anybody be sorry? Let me see. Smillet, here, would be surprised to find how little sorry he was able to be. Mary?—hump! not so sorry as the other woman; she would be more angry than sorry, I fancy. My mother would be

shocked and indignant. She doesn't love anybody but her husband; she thinks she loves me, but it is not really me, it is her son, an imaginary creature, not Sebastian Strome! The news that Sebastian Strome had cut his throat might break her heart; but it would break rather through mortification at having been so grossly deceived in him, than at the thought that, being what he was, she would never see him again. My father—yes, it would break his heart too. But there would be no credit to me in that. He knows me less than any of them. After all, then, there is only one creature living who both knows me and loves me—for I believe she does love me, the anonymous letter to the contrary notwithstanding—and she has the best reason to hate me; besides which, she bores me, and is very much in my way. What a position to be placed in! And there's no way out of it—at least, none that I have the pluck to take. Of course, I might take the next train down to Cedarhurst, and say: 'Here I am, a new prodigal! I am not a saint and a gentleman, but a gambler, a liar, and a scamp; and a beggar into the bargain!' That would be dramatic and decisive enough; but nothing is so certain as that I shall never do it. Nor shall I commit suicide. Hump! this is dull work. I think I'll take a leaf out of Smillet's book, and have a nap!"

Strome possessed the useful faculty of going to sleep at a few minutes' notice, under what would ordinarily be deemed unfavourable circumstances. It was by virtue of this power that he was enabled to sustain an amount of physical and mental strain that would have broken down most people. Accordingly, all he found it necessary to do now was to draw up a supplementary chair for the support of his legs, to let his head recline against the cushion, and resolutely to hold thought in check during half a hundred breaths. After that he slept peacefully.

Mrs. Blister, shortly before the time of Strome's return with his friend, had stepped round to a neighbouring street to have a chat with a female crony, who kept a strictly well-behaved little cook-shop, with a back parlour in which it was sometimes possible for particular friends to obtain eleemosynary thimblefuls of gin, with a scrap of cake thrown in for the sake of additional respectability. Mrs. Bartlet, the crony aforesaid, resembled Mrs. Blister so far as widowhood was concerned; but was

in most other respects that good lady's foil. Thus, while Mrs. Blister weighed seven stone nine, Mrs. Bartlet, who was barely half an inch taller than her friend, turned the scale at eleven stone thirteen, or twelve four with her Hindja shawl on, as she was fond of remarking. While Mrs. Blister was partially blind, the mistress of the cook-shop possessed (and knew how to use) a pair of exceedingly sharp and sparkling little black eyes, which were quite in harmony with a pungent and intrepid tongue, and a shrewd capacity for business. Mrs. Blister, again, had a natural tendency to contemplate life from the Exeter Hall standpoint; but Mrs. Bartlet was of rather a sceptical and independent turn of mind, accustomed to trust to her own wits and resources, and by no means prone to confide overmuch in those of other people. To make an end of this comparison, Mrs. Bartlet, though she had been left by her husband with no better support than three hungry children and thirty pounds' worth of debts, had worked her way up to redundant solvency and adequate social consideration; while Mrs. Blister, the relict of a hard-working and fairly successful house-builder, had long since buried the only child she ever possessed, and being of a meek and mouluscous temper, had not only failed to increase her banking account, but by dint of imprudent investments and ill-advised expenditures, had contrived insensibly to "take the hair off" what she had. Upon the whole, therefore, as will readily be understood, there was no obstacle to a fast friendship between her and Mrs. Bartlet, since the interests of the two could nowhere come into collision, and Mrs. Blister was as disposed to accept advice and information as Mrs. Bartlet was to administer them.

"Ah, Mrs. Blister, and how do you find yourself this cold weather?" enquired Mrs. Bartlet's brisk voice, as her friend's groping figure appeared in the little shop. "Dick, take those tarts round to fifty-nine, and be back in four minutes or I'll know the reason why. Step inside here, Mrs. Blister, and I'll find a drop of something comfortin' to give you. You look to need it."

"You're always s-so hospitable," replied Mrs. Blister, gratefully availng herself of the invitation. "I didn't come to s-stop; only I'd like to take one of your nice teacakes home with me, jus-at in case Mr. S-strome was to come home hungry."

'One or two customers entering at this

juncture, the hostess was prevented from making an immediate reply to her guest's proposition, although she so far took note of it as to put a cake of the required description aside; business being business, even among friends, and Mrs. Blister's recollection of her own orders sometimes proving short, especially after a glass or two of Mrs. Bartlet's unsweetened gin. As soon as the customers left her at liberty, she hustled into the little parlour, and after the production of the favourite bottle, took up the conversation where it had been interrupted.

"So he comes home 'angry, Mr. Strome, does he? I'd been thinking as a rule gentlemen lunched at their clubs."

"He's so often obliged to be out all night," Mrs. Blister explained; "and half the time he'd never think to eat anything if someone didn't look after him."

"Ah, obliged to be out all night, is he?" said Mrs. Bartlet, wiping her lips on the corner of her apron, and then placing her plump red hands upon her well-padded hips. "I should say likely he would need someone to look after him, Mrs. Blister, as you observe!" and the woman of business inclined her head to one side, and stared meaningfully at her friend with her sharp black eyes.

"Only to give him something to eat," the latter explained again, with meek insistence. "He's a very nice quiet gentleman, is Mr. Strome, I'm sure. I'm glad to have him, and nobody could ask for a better lodger. He's to enter the sacred calling."

"Well, sacred is as sacred does, that's my mind; and no slight to you hintended, ma'am," was Mrs. Bartlet's reply. "For what I see we've got pretty nigh parsons enough. More parsons than money to pay 'em with, I've 'eard tell. And I expect there's many goes into it bein', so to say, forced than as choosing it hindernent. It's harmy or Church with them gentlemen's sons that has no fortunes; go into trade they can't, for fear of dirtyin' their 'ands. But it's not what a man does, but the way he does it, that dirties his 'ands—that's my mind, Mrs. Blister. I say nothin' against the clergy, ma'am—quite hopposite to it; but if their callin's the 'ighest, fewer there'll be to it fitted. Your Mr. Strome may be one on 'em; I don't say the hopposite, though staying out all night, as you say he do, may seem a queer way to prove it. Drat that boy Dick! when will he be back from carryin'

them tarts, I wonder? Ah, it's not always we as trades fair and square across the counter as has the dirty hands, Mrs. Blister; it's them as trades across the pulpit, with the hopen Bible under their noses, and—Comin', sir."

It was perhaps fortunate, both for the hearer and the utterer of this harangue, that the appearance of a customer in the shop without prevented it from going any farther. Poor Mrs. Blister was already quite stiff with consternation, and Mrs. Bartlet, who, much as she liked the sound of her own voice, never seemed to find its effects soothing, might soon have lashed herself into a state of excitement that would have led to observations even more severe than those already recorded. But business was providentially brisk during the next ten minutes; and Dick returned from his mission with the tarts; and, altogether, by the time the mistress of the establishment was able to rejoin her friend in the parlour, her sterner mood was considerably mollified. Mrs. Blister, on her side, had been prudently fortifying her astounded sensibilities by further applications to the bottle; so that the dialogue between the two ladies recommenced under auspices greatly more genial than might have been expected.

"And one thing I should have mentioned—it's quite my fault that I did not, dear Mrs. Bartlet, but you know I am so forgetful! Mr. Strome can't be goin' into the Church for the sake of money, for he's to marry Miss Dene, and they say she's as rich as the Archbishop of Canterbury! And I've got a letter in my pocket this very moment, with Mr. Strome's name on the envelope in her handwriting; it came this morning, and I'm keeping it safe against he comes back. So I think he must be one of the elect, I do, I'm sure! Don't you?"

"Let's ave a look at the letter, my dear," said Mrs. Bartlet, wiping her hands on her apron, while her face softened with a sympathetic curiosity. "Oh, to be sure, that's a real lady's 'andwritin', and no need of the coat-of-arms to tell us! Rich, is she? Well, if she's fond of him, I don't say no to it for one, and as far as she goes he'll be one of the elect, I make no doubt of it! Though what he should be doin' with stayin' on all night and missin' her letters, 'e may know, not I! I 'ope all may turn out well, if only for your sake, Mrs. Blister; for she ought to do somethin' andsome for you, for the care you've taken of him, buyin' him cakes at a shillin' the pound,

and cheap at the price, though I say it! Take another drop, my dear; it'll do you good. I must take a look what mischief that boy Dick's got into!"

In edifying converse of this kind the afternoon slipped away; and the gin was so fortifying, and the snow-storm so suggestive of the need of fortification, that it was after six o'clock before Mrs. Blister, in a most gushing and optimistic frame of mind, found herself fairly on her way back to her own house, with her shawl over her head and her cake under her arm. At the door she was overtaken by a telegraph messenger, with a telegram for Mr. Sebastian Strome. She took the responsibility of assuring the messenger that there would be no answer; and having dismissed him with a blessing and twopence, she found her way upstairs, shook the snow from her garments, put the letter, the telegram, and the cake on a tray, and with the tray in her hand knocked at Strome's door and entered. It was quite dark: evidently Mr. Strome had not yet come home. Advancing blindly into the room, Mrs. Blister was so unfortunate as to stumble over a chair; in the effort to save herself she let fall the tray, with all its contents; and at the same moment she heard, or fancied she heard, an unearthly sound close to her ear, something between a heavy sigh and a groan. Mrs. Blister's potations, conscientious though they had been, had not fortified her against the supernatural, and without waiting to recover anything but her own feet, she made for the door again with what despatch her shaking limbs allowed. Arrived in her own chamber, she first locked the door, and then throwing herself on the bed, was speedily lost to the consciousness of outward things.

Strome, awaking with a start, found himself in darkness, with a coldness pervading body and limbs, and an undefinable anxiety pressing upon his heart. He had had a vivid and disagreeable dream, the influence of which, in the absence of all light and sense of position, still clung about him. For a minute or so, he could not have told where he was; and in spite of the cold, sweat stood upon his forehead.

Presently Smillet's peaceable snores brought him to himself. He felt for the match-box, and struck a light. By the time his eyes had become accustomed to the glare, he had recovered his self-possession. There was an envelope on the floor at his feet; he picked it up, and read his own

name upon it in Mary Deane's handwriting. Clenching his teeth, he tore it open, and read the letter which it contained.

"Is this a coincidence?" he thought; "or is it the earnest of my dream?"

A yawn from Smillett drew his eyes to that quarter, and he saw that his friend was waking up. He walked over to the fire-place, and leaning against the mantelpiece, waited with the letter in his hand. It now occurred to him to wonder how long the letter had been in the room. He looked at the date; it was the previous morning. Just about the time that he had received the anonymous communication! This letter contained the same request as that, though it did not give the same reason for it. It must have arrived by the early post, while he was still at the club. Strome regretted, for more reasons than one, having left it to chance whether or not he should accompany Smillett to hear Jenny Lind. It would have been better, on all accounts, to have found out what was going on in Falkirk Road. It was too late to remedy the mistake to-day. It might be too late altogether. He would decide that question to-morrow.

"Well, are you really going to wake up?" he said to Smillett with a smile.

"Oh, I'm awake!" exclaimed Smillett, jumping up with an absurd pretence of alertness. "Is it late? I had such an odd dream! I dreamt you were having an auction here, and I was just bidding for your old dressing-gown!"

Strome took a sudden inward resolution. "Your dream may come true," he said. "At all events, I'm going to have the auction." He paused a moment and then added: "I'm bankrupt: I've not got twenty pounds in the world."

"You don't mean it!" cried Smillett, bringing up his eye-glass. Strome remained silent. "By Jove, I was certain of it!" continued the other, in a cheerful falsetto, dropping the eye-glass and sticking his hands in his pockets. "I knew it from the beginning! I told you not to play with that fellow Fawley again. By Jove, old fellow, I'm awfully sorry, I am really! If you want a thousand, you know, I can arrange to let you have it. Only—you won't play with it?"

Strome smiled again and shook his head. "Never mind, Thomas, I don't mean to borrow. Thank you all the same. I've had enough of playing with your money, and—Stop! I didn't lose that—what did I do with it?" He put his hand

hurriedly to an inside pocket as he spoke, and drew out therefrom upwards of two hundred pounds in bank notes. Having counted them over, he held them out to Smillett. "That's what you won while you were asleep," he said. "I'd quite forgotten about it."

"It doesn't belong to me," Smillett said, retreating from the proffered money. "I began last night with twenty pounds, and won over a hundred with them. But I only play for the fun, you know, so I gave the winnings to you to lose for me. If you won it's none of my business. You'll have to keep it."

Strome reddened up to the roots of his hair. "I can't argue the matter with you, Smillett," he said sharply. "If you don't take it, I shall put it in the fire."

"Well, in with it," returned the other.

Strome turned as quick as thought, but the fire had utterly gone out. Smillett laughed. Strome laughed also, rather constrainedly, and said: "The gas will do as well."

"I'll turn it out if you move," cried Smillett, laying his hand on the button. "Look here, now, why can't you listen to reason? I never did keep any money I won at play, and I never mean to. If you'd lost it you wouldn't have owed it to me, and—"

"I can't argue the matter," Strome repeated, interrupting him in a quieter tone. "I can't take the money, just because I've lost all mine. If I had kept the four thousand I had at eight o'clock this morning I should probably have no objection. That's all. It isn't a question of logic. It might be different if I had anyone dependent upon me." He broke off here, and a slight change passed over his face. After a pause, he tossed the bundle of notes on to the table, and added: "Don't say any more about it."

"You might use it till you've had your auction, at any rate," suggested Smillett plaintively. "I think you're very crotchety, upon my word I do. You're going to be married soon, and what difference will a couple of hundred make to you then?"

"Wait till I am married, then. Meanwhile, I've paid my bills, and shall have enough to go on with. But the whole idea is absurd. When I want to borrow money I shall apply to Fawley. What is that on the floor by your chair?"

"It looks like a tea-cake," said Smillett, stooping to examine it through his eye-glass. He picked it up, and along with it

something else which was close beside it. "Here's a paper addressed to you—a telegram."

"Give it here—or, no; open it, and read it out. From my solicitor, I suppose. I was to have met him to-day."

"This is from Barbara Trench," said Smillet reading. "'Fanny Jackson at Vicarage—badly hurt on railway. Mr. Strome bruised. Please come home. Who is Fanny Jackson? There must have been a railway accident. Dear me, I hope it isn't serious.'

Strome had quickly stepped forward and taken the telegram, and was standing with his gaze fixed upon it. He said in an inward tone: "He was saving her—I saw how it was." Then he added aloud: "I must take the eight o'clock train, Smillet; you'll excuse my leaving you so abruptly." Then in the inward tone once more: "Bruised; oh, father! more than that. It's my doing—it only needed that. Oh, father!" He still continued to look at the telegram.

"Can I do anything—be of any use?" enquired Smillet uneasily.

"What? You'll excuse my leaving you so abruptly. I must take the eight o'clock train. I've had bad news—a telegram. My father has been injured trying to save a woman on the railway. They were between two trains. It's my doing; I should have gone to her yesterday." He uttered these sentences mechanically, as if his real thoughts were elsewhere. Smillet was appalled at the haggard expression of his face. Strome folded the telegram carefully and put it in his pocket; then looked about as if in search of something. By-and-by he pressed his hands over his face, and when he removed them he looked more master of himself than before, and spoke in a livelier voice; but he did not seem aware that he had said anything already.

"I shall be obliged to leave you unceremoniously, Smillet. They want me at home—accidents will happen, you know. You might spend the night here, if you like, and look after my belongings while I'm away. I shall just take my bag, with a change of linen. What's all this money? Yours or mine? Oh, I recollect!"

"I wish you'd take it—some of it; you might need it," faltered Smillet.

Strange to say, Strome no longer seemed to regard the offer in the light of an insult.

"It's kind of you to think of that, Smillet," he said. "To tell the truth, I

was pretty hard hit last night, as I suppose you've heard; if you can let me have fifty I should be much obliged. There might be a funeral to pay for—who knows? People die every day."

"Of course they do," exclaimed Smillet, emboldened by his unexpected success to attempt a farther enterprise, "and you'll die yourself if you don't take something to eat. Do you know you've had nothing since we dined together yesterday—more than twenty-four hours? I believe you're light-headed at this moment, upon my word I do. You don't half know what you're about. Come, why not try a bit of this tea-cake; it looks good, wherever it came from. Plenty of time before eight o'clock."

Strome complied with the same surprising docility that he had exhibited in the previous matter; and he and Smillet eat the tea-cake, without knowing anything of its origin or previous history. It was now half-past seven, and Smillet, who had by this time assumed the direction in everything, having packed the other's valise, insisted upon carrying it to the railway-station for him. Arrived there, he bought the ticket, and saw his friend safely into a compartment.

"I shall stay at your rooms until I hear from you," he said through the window. "Isn't there anything I can do while you're away?"

"No; unless you'll get an auctioneer to appraise the furniture. Those pictures ought to bring something. I can't tell what may happen now. Strange, isn't it, Thomas? and yet they say there's nothing in dreams. Well, I'm much obliged to you—good-bye!"

"I don't believe he's fit to be trusted by himself, upon my word I don't," soliloquised Smillet, as the train moved away. "Something seemed to have come over him all of a sudden; it couldn't have been the telegram, could it? It's a comfort to think he got the cake down. I wonder whether Miss Dene knows who Fanny Jackson is?"

MERV.

FOR the last five years the first approach of spring has brought with it rumours of Russian military operations on the eastern shore of the Caspian and in the Atrek valley, all pointing in the ultimate direction of Merv. These rumours have been invariably met with categorical denials on the part of Russian officials; but, for all

that they have eventually turned out to be correct, and they are now simple historical facts. The present open season for military adventures has, as usual, been heralded by similar reports, and we have heard almost simultaneously from Berlin, St. Petersburg, and Tiflis, that twenty thousand men were being despatched to reinforce the troops under the command of General Lomakin in the trans-Caspian province. A St. Petersburg journal admitted that these reinforcements could only be intended to operate against the Merv Turkmans; but, on the other hand, Lord Dufferin has, no doubt, been assured by this time that the whole business meant nothing, and that there is no intention whatever of advancing to Merv. We may believe as much or as little as we like of such conflicting statements; but the best way to draw our own conclusion on the matter is to study the progress of Russia during the last few years in the Turkman country, bearing in mind, at the same time, the value of Muscovite pledges and denials in the cases of Khiva and Cabul.

The expedition to Khiva, as Sir Henry Rawlinson says, affords an apt illustration of the normal course of Russian progress in the East. It resulted in the annexation of a considerable slice of territory, worthless in itself, but valuable as securing access to those strategic lines across the steppe which are essential to the attainment, sooner or later, of that goal never lost sight of by Russian statesmen. But so long as the route between Krasnovodsk and Khiva, which is waterless for two-thirds of its extent, forms the only connecting link between the Caspian and the Oxus, and while the cantonment of Petro-Alexandrovsk, opposite to Khiva, remains entirely isolated, the Russian position in Central Asia is imperfect and insecure. To do away with this insecurity, Merv must be occupied; and we may, therefore, be certain that every effort will be made to occupy it. The very dry and technical nature of most of the dissertations on the Central Asian Question has contributed in a great measure to the ignorance, incredulity, and indifference of the English public about everything connected with it. They cannot be expected to take much interest in matters which even assumed experts and their appointed guides do not always seem to understand; and the news, when it does come, that the Russians are at last in Merv, will probably cause as little ex-

citement here as that the Chinese have invaded Annam. It is now, however, a settled point of both English sentiment and policy that we must hold India at all cost, and especially at as little cost as possible; but the vast majority of us do not seem to realise the fact that a Russian occupation of Merv means a heavy addition to the burden which we have to bear. Whoever may be the future occupants of the uneasy throne of Cabul, they will be no more free agents with a Lomakin at Merv than Shere Ali would have been with a Rasgonof at the Bala Hissar; and the moral influence on Oriental minds of our armies retiring from Afghanistan, while the Russians were advancing to Merv, would be disastrous to our prestige, and our prestige in the East is synonymous with our existence.

The history of the Russian movement towards Merv commences after the fall and virtual annexation of Khiva in June, 1873. Lord Granville, when the treaty, extorted from the Khivan Khan, was communicated to him, coldly replied to the explanations offered to cover the bad faith which had distinguished Russian diplomacy in the matter, that "Her Majesty's Government saw no practical advantage in examining too minutely how far the Khivan arrangements were in strict accordance with the assurances given by Count Schouvalof as to the intentions with which the expedition was undertaken." He, nevertheless, in spite of the discouraging precedent, asked for another pledge from Russia not to seize Merv, nor to interfere with the independence of Afghanistan. Promises and professions in profusion the Imperial Chancellor was quite ready to give, and then followed, in January, 1874, the renewed assurance—"positive," moreover—that "the Imperial Cabinet continues to consider Afghanistan entirely beyond its sphere of action." Shere Ali, already alarmed at the fall of Khiva, and a premature report of an advance on Merv, sent a confidential agent to Lord Northbrook at Simla, in September, 1873, with what result is now well known. In the beginning of 1874, the Emperor told Lord Augustus Loftus that "there was no intention of making any expedition against the Turkmans; but if they should attack or molest the Russian settlements they must suffer for the consequences of it;" and about the same time Prince Gortchakov said: "We shall not attack them, but if

they attack us, or commit depredations on our commercial travellers, we shall be obliged to inflict punishment on them." The saving clause is in every way convenient, for it is not in the nature of a Turkman, any more than in that of a Khaiberree, to abstain from robbery when there is a chance, and if Russian columns enter the Turkman country they must naturally expect to be attacked. With regard, moreover, to the over zealous and unauthorised action of distant military commanders, the chancellor stated with "great decision" that, "although there was a party anxious for military activity and decorations, he felt that his influence was sufficiently strong to counteract such endeavours, and so long as he held power these efforts would be restrained." While all these fine assurances were being lavished at St. Petersburg, it was perfectly well known there that the Turkmans had plundered a caravan, and carried off a Russian employé as captive to Merv, and that the Russian commander had threatened to serve the marauders as the Yomuts had been served, "in the Circassian fashion," if the plunder and captive were not restored. But the Emperor was about to visit England, and it was desirable that there should be "no cloud on the political horizon." So Prince Gortchakow wrote to Count Brannow in March, 1874, that "the orders of the emperor, that no expedition should be undertaken against the Tekké Turkmans, which means in the direction of Merv, have been given in such peremptory terms that no local ambition will dare to take the liberty of transgressing them; while the scientific expedition, already much restricted in its scope, will remain strictly limited to the domain of science by a supreme decision, which has also been categorically expressed." Subsequently, the Russian Foreign Office chose to deny that any caravan had been attacked, or that any expedition in consequence had been contemplated against the Turkmans.

In May, 1874, General Lomakin appeared on the scene, as "the supreme authority on the Atrek and Goorgan," and immediately issued a magniloquent circular to the chiefs of the Turkmans, inviting them to come and pay their respects to him as the representative of the "great sovereign," significantly adding, "look to yourselves for good or evil." This circular, and other incidents connected with the new governor's arrival, caused an interview

between Lord A. Loftus and M. de Westmann, the acting minister for foreign affairs, when the matter was conveniently explained away as being "mal entendu."

In the spring of 1875 came the usual rumour of an expedition against Merv, with the usual diplomatic phrase-making thereon. Wrote the chancellor: "His Imperial Majesty has no intention of extending the frontiers of Russia such as they exist at present in Central Asia, either on the side of Bokhara or on the side of Krasnovodsk and of the Atrek. We have no inducement to do so. On the contrary, the Emperor deems any extension of our frontiers in those parts as being opposed to our own interests." The security of the existing frontiers and of trade had, however, to be considered; but unfortunately for the good intentions of the Czar and his chancellor, "the configuration of these countries, and the manners of their inhabitants," did not admit of the Russian Foreign Office stating "the precise measures beforehand" which might be necessary for the practical attainment of that security. All this time General Lomakin was preparing with steady assiduity his plans for an advance on Kizil Arvat, an important stage on the road to Merv. The Emperor had in the meantime paid his visit to London. The scientific expedition, which was to have remained "strictly limited to the domain of science," suddenly assumed the proportions of a Cossack foray issuing from Chikisliar along the course of the Atrek, which ended in enforcing the submission of certain tribes in the vicinity of that river and of the Soombar. This occurred in 1875, and other tentative expeditions followed in 1876, in the autumn of which year a small Russian force, which appears to have been no more than a reconnaissance, actually penetrated to Kizil Arvat, practically the half-way house to Merv.

In 1877 a new expedition, amounting to some four thousand men, set out in the same direction. A proclamation in Turki was issued to the Jaafer Baee Turkmans by General Lomakin, in which—in direct contradiction to the pledges and explanations of St. Petersburg—he told them that they must assist him with transport and other aid in his campaign, as he had "received orders from the Emperor to march upon the Tekké tribes with troops, to erect a fort at Kizil Arvat, and to keep a perpetual garrison there." Little information could be gleaned from the Russian journals

regarding the movements of Lomakin's column, doubtless owing to orders from the St. Petersburg Government; but an official bulletin from the Caucasus in the beginning of June announced that Lomakin had been attacked at Kizil Arvat by six thousand Tekkés, whom, after a combat of four hours' duration, he had defeated with severe loss, himself only losing one man killed and eleven wounded. On the face of it, this bulletin belongs to that class of inventions in which the Russians are adepts; but even conceding that Lomakin gained some temporary success at the outset, there was no doubt as to the sequel, for the Russki Mir was constrained to admit that the expedition had come to consummate grief, ending in Lomakin's retreat to the Caspian. However, before this came to pass, Lord Derby, stirred from the depths of his constitutional caution, plucked up heart of grace to write what may be designated as one of his courageous despatches, June 13th, 1877, to Lord Augustus Loftus, then our ambassador at St. Petersburg. He said: "It seems not impossible that the pending operations may ultimately end in the occupation of Merv unless positive instructions to the contrary are at once issued by the Russian Government. Her Majesty's Government have upon more than one occasion impressed upon the Government of Russia the evil consequences which must follow from such a step." After recapitulating the complications likely to arise from a Russian advance, and quoting Prince Gortchakov's declaration of only the previous November, that "there was no question of such an expedition, nor any idea of occupying Merv," he concludes: "I have now to instruct your excellency to make a renewed representation to the Government of Russia on the subject of the movements of Russian troops now taking place on the Turkman steppe, recalling the above observations to their recollection, and clearly, though courteously, pointing out that the occupation of Merv would be held by the general opinion of the inhabitants of the neighbouring regions of Asia to announce a design on the part of His Majesty the Emperor of Russia to extend his influence, if not his dominion, into territories with which Her Majesty's Government have understood from the Government of His Imperial Majesty that it is not His Majesty's intention to interfere. Such an impression would impose upon Her Majesty's Government the necessity of

making a corresponding advance in order to allay apprehension, and to remove misconception from the minds of the people of those countries. They could not, however, look upon so close an approximation of the outposts of the two empires as in itself desirable, or likely to facilitate the discharge of the difficult duties with which the administrations of each government are charged." These be brave words—for Lord Derby—only requiring known firmness of purpose, and the conviction in the minds of opponents that suitable action would follow should occasion require, to render them statesmanlike. They were written, as we have said, on June 13th; but on June 30th, Sir William Thomson, our then minister at Tehran, reported the withdrawal of the Russians from Kizil Arvat, a fact which was also known about the same time at St. Petersburg, so that the Russian Foreign Office could reply with an air of injured innocence that the movement on Kizil Arvat was nothing more than a simple military expedition, "such as our troops in the Caucasus undertake every year to keep order on our frontiers." The most "formal orders" had been given to the commandant of the column not to exceed his instructions in this sense; and consequently M. de Giers concluded with the most intrepid assurance that "*Les inquiétudes relatives à Merv tombent d'elles-mêmes en présence de ces franches explications.*"

Towards the close of 1877 an arrangement was arrived at between the Tekké chiefs and the Shah of Persia. By it the Merv Turkmans declared their allegiance to Persia; they engaged that raids on their part on Persian territory should be discontinued; that the Persian flag was to be hoisted at Merv, and that a Persian agent should reside there; that one hundred hostages composed of men of position from the four divisions of the tribes, should reside at Meshed in Persia, but without their families; and that a body of one thousand horsemen—about two hundred and fifty from each division of the tribe—was to be placed at the service of the Shah's Government; these horsemen to provide their own horses and arms, and to be under the command of their own chiefs, but to be paid by the Shah, and to be employed in any part of Persia where their services might be required. On their side, the Persian Government recognised the Merv Turkmans as Persian subjects, promising protection and favourable treatment; they

agreed to defray the expenses of the hostages sent to Meshed, at an estimated cost of about six thousand tomans, or two thousand seven hundred and eighty-seven pounds sterling a year; they undertook to pay the horsemen furnished by the tribes for service in Persia at the same rate as that allowed by the Government to the Khorassan irregular horse, which would amount annually to over thirty thousand tomans, or nearly fourteen thousand pounds sterling. In addition, they granted permission for one thousand families of Merv Tekké Turkmans to occupy Old Sarakhs and the adjacent lands on the Tejend, the name by which the Hurree Rood comes to be known as it flows northward through Turkman territory. The Shah gave a firman to the chiefs, stating in general terms that the Tekké Turkmans of Merv have always been, and now are, subjects of Persia; that all disloyal acts committed by them in past years are condoned; and that in consideration of their now engaging to act as obedient and faithful subjects, His Majesty assures them of his protection and favour. At the time this arrangement was made with the Persian Government, the Merv chiefs believed that the Akhal portion of their tribe would eventually withdraw from the Akhal country, which is inconveniently near to General Lomakin's command, and join them at Merv. They considered that such a step would be a gain to the whole tribe, because the encampments they occupy at present along the line of the Attrek are straggling, and some of them are badly supplied with water, besides being separated from each other by tracts of desert, thus preventing a general rallying of the tribe in time to support any section of it that may be suddenly attacked. On the other hand, at Merv each camp has the advantage of an equally abundant supply of water with all the others, and an ample extent of fertile land; all the tribes occupying a compact position on the Moorghab, which is very favourable for defence. Their lands at Merv are amply sufficient to accommodate more than double the number of those now dwelling on them. Three branches of the Akhal Tekkés, namely, the Beg and Seechmez at Bam and Boormeh, and the Vekel at Anow, announced their intention of quitting the Akhal country, and removing eastwards to the Tejend, or to Merv, in the event of their being again attacked by the Russians, but it is more

than doubtful, as recent events lead us to conclude, if they have yet carried out their intention.

Let us examine the bearing of the above convention in relation to our interests in Central Asia and in India. The true policy of any British Government will undoubtedly consist in bringing the Turkman tribes under our influence and control, either through the medium of Persia or Afghanistan. As regards the first named power, we have long since abdicated our predominant position in the councils of Naer-u-deen Shah, thanks to the masterly inactivity and non-intervention school both in India and England. At this moment Persia is completely under the spell of Russia, and in case of open rupture with the latter power we should very soon have to reckon with the active hostility or the malevolent neutrality of the Tehran Government. The only way to recover our influence with that Government is to assert ourselves again in Persia as we have done in Afghanistan; and as a first step towards that end our relations with Tehran should be placed once more under the direction of the Viceroy of India in Council, with a tried and skilled Indian official as our representative in the Persian capital. Otherwise, the agreement between the Turkmans and the Persian Government, which might be skilfully used to checkmate Russian designs, will bring us little or no advantage. The Turkmans have been for years past the terror of the northern frontier of Persia. They are bigoted Sunnis, and hate the Persian Shiabs; they are nomads, with the nomad's love of independence; they are borderers, with the borderer's thievish proclivities—including man-stealing and cattle-lifting. They have no fixed forms of government, being ruled only by their religious fanaticism and a certain respect for their white-beards, or elders. About the commencement of the seventeenth century, Shah Abbas the Great seems to have been able to manage them. He brought several thousand Koord families from Koordistan on the Turkish frontier, and settled them along the northern boundary of Persia with a view of protecting it from Turkman inroads—setting thieves, in fact, to catch thieves. This policy succeeded well enough so long as the Persian rulers could control the Koords, but when these came to make common cause with the Turkmans, the old system of plundering and slave-hunting began again, and has lasted, with hardly an interval, until the present time; and

will last, unless the agreement recently entered into proves to be stronger than it seems. The allegiance offered by the Merv chiefs to Nasr-u-deen is worthless. The Turkmans have sworn fealty before now to the Shah-in-Shah, and broken faith when it suited them. They have done the same to Khiva, Bokhara, and Afghanistan, and would do it all over again to-morrow to Russia, much as they detest and fear her, if interest or necessity demanded it of them. Recent travellers have unanimously asserted that they look to Great Britain as their real mainstay against Russian encroachment, and it is the British power alone that can ever succeed, without resorting to actual coercion by force of arms, in securing their wild allegiance, either directly or indirectly through Afghanistan. The agreement has given Merv to Persia, but Persia is too weak to retain it whenever it suits the Turkmans to reclaim their independence; and as matters stand at present, she must be the passive tool of St. Petersburg.

Having thus endeavoured to give some idea of the value and tendency of the Persian intervention in the Merv question, so far as it touches British interests, we shall now resume the history of the Russian operations in the Turkman steppe from where we left off at the close of 1877, and bring it down, so far as it is known, to the present time. In the spring of 1878, when war between England and Russia seemed imminent, General Lomakin once more commenced his preparations for the march to Merv. From Boojnoord a correspondent informed the British Legation at Tehran that the Russians had notified their intention to the Tekkés of marching against them in the beginning of May, and that they wanted to know what the Tekkés had to say for themselves. The force under Lomakin at Krasnovodsk had been considerably reduced during the Turkish war in order to strengthen the Russian army in Armenia and the Caucasus, but it had now been increased again to some eight thousand men. With these Lomakin was to endeavour to force his way through the Tekké country to Merv, where he was to form a junction with Colonel Grotenhelm's column, coming down from Khiva by way of Charjui on the Oxus; and then to co-operate in the general plan of advance into Afghanistan, according to circumstances, under the supreme direction of Kaufmann, the able Governor-General of Russian Turkestan.

Lomakin's destination, either singly or in conjunction with the other columns, was Herât. It must be here noted, that although this general's operations were a part of the great demonstration that was to be made against India in the event of war, they still had an independent scope of their own, which did not necessarily drop out of sight when the Afghan incident ceased to be an immediate factor in the Russian policy. The occupation of Merv remained, and still remains, a fixed part in the Central Asian programme of Russia; and last year it would have been carried out, notwithstanding all Russian pledges to the contrary and the signature of the Treaty of Berlin, which dispersed the war-cloud for a time, had it not been for the disaster which again befell Lomakin's column at the hands of the Turkmans, when he had succeeded in advancing considerably more than half way to his objective point. After his defeat he was compelled to fall back to the Caspian, and, as a matter of course, the Russian Foreign Office took great credit to itself for loyal behaviour and good faith, in recalling him as soon as the Treaty of Berlin assured a continuance of peace between England and Russia. When we remember the comparatively large force placed under General Donald Stewart's command last year, on the outbreak of the Afghan war, and the extreme rapidity of that officer's march from the Indus on Candahar and Girishk, it can now be understood that it was a race between him and Lomakin for Herât; and it was only when the discomfiture of the latter by the Turkmans was known for certain, that the Home Government gave directions to stop the farther advance of Biddulph's division on Herât after it had reached Girishk.

The Moscow Gazette, at the latter end of 1878, contained some interesting letters from a correspondent who was apparently attached to General Lomakin's staff. They gave an account of the comparatively unknown Turkman region, nominally subject to Russia, which extends from Krasnovodsk to Kizil Arvat, and through which the Russian army marched in its attempt to reach Merv. A good deal of mystery and uncertainty, as usual, surrounds the progress of that army; but rumour gave Abived as the limit of its advance, before sickness, privation, and the guerilla tactics of the nomads, compelled it to retrace its steps. By the end of October Lomakin appears to have returned to Chikisliar on the Caspian,

having left detachments in fortified posts at Chat, situated at the junction of the Soombar with the Attrek, Kizil Arvat, Kizil Chekli, and Askabat. Chat is midway between Kizil Arvat and Chikisliar, and is a position of great strategic importance, as it dominates the Attrek valley and the Persian road between Astrabad and Herât, enabling any general who holds it to advance to Merv again, during the open season, with greater facility.

The annual attempt to get to Merv for 1879 does not seem to have been more successful than the preceding ones, though we have no doubt that by continually "pegging away," success must eventually crown the efforts of the Russian generals. The first notes of renewed preparations, on a greater scale than heretofore, called forth the usual remonstrances, more or less energetic, from Downing Street; and Lomakin, in consequence, was constrained to commence the campaign with a moderate display of force. The Tekkés seem to have taken the initiative, and to have attacked the Russian commander before he had time even to penetrate into their steppe. On April 15th they surprised two thousand Russians who were guarding three thousand camels, collected for the expedition, and succeeded in carrying off some of the animals. They were overtaken by the reinforcements immediately despatched in pursuit of them, and a combat ensued, which, according to Russian accounts, presented some novel features in Turkman warfare. Instead of dispersing the camels, and attacking in their usual loose order, the Tekkés dismounted, and occupied a strong position half way up a hill, where they made a parapet of kneeling camels, from behind which they opened fire with the steadiness and rapidity of European sharpshooters. The fight lasted till night, when both parties retreated in opposite directions; the Muscovites finding it too hazardous to follow an enemy who had suddenly developed such unexpected strength. The Russians account for their bad success by saying that the Turkmans were armed with breech-loading rifles of English make; but that is all moonshine, for it would puzzle anyone who is acquainted with the political and geographical situation in Central Asia, to show how our rifles could ever have found their way to the regions of the Kizil Koom Desert. This temporary check, however, does not necessarily prevent a renewal of operations this season, and efforts have already been made to re-

commence the campaign. Strong reinforcements have been ordered to the Attrek from the Caucasus, and part of the troops have already left Baku for Krasnovodsk and Ashurada. The new expedition is to be commanded by General Lazaref, of Armenian fame, assisted by Colonel Malama, as chief of the staff, and Colonel Grodekov, the enterprising officer who last year journeyed in uniform from Samarkand to Herât, Meshed, and Astrabad, and recently submitted a military survey of his route to the emperor.

After all this record of baffled but persistent enterprise on the one hand, and jealous scrutiny on the other, it may reasonably be asked what is the peculiar importance that attaches itself to Merv, a place of no commercial value to Russia, and five hundred and seventy-five miles from the Caspian? The answer is, that since the absorption of Khiva by Russia, the possession of Merv is desirable in order to consolidate and strengthen the Czar's latest acquisitions in Central Asia. But what is of still more importance in the eyes of Russian statesmen and generals, the possession of Merv gives an easy and rapid approach to Herât, and Herât is the key of India. The distance between Merv and Herât is about two hundred and fifty miles; between the latter place and Candahar three hundred and sixty-seven miles; and between Herât and the Indus seven hundred and seventy miles. "In order to produce a counterpoise against the growing influence of England in Beloochistan," says the Russki Mir, "it is necessary that Russia should occupy Herât."

The nearest road to Afghanistan is through Persia, and at the same time it is the most practicable one, as it runs through a comparatively easy and fertile country; but this route may not always be available in war, and an expedition by it would entail more strain than the Russian military machine could well bear. From Merv, however, with the resources—small as they may possibly be at present—of the Russian Central Asian provinces behind it, an army, sufficiently strong to create a powerful diversion, at all events, in case of European complications, could be directed on Herât in three weeks; whereas it would take six for a British force to reach it from Quetta, even if that force were ready and concentrated for an advance, which it is more than likely it would not be. Though the convenient scepticism of some people, who do not

want to believe inconvenient facts, may refuse to recognise Herât as the key to India, yet the united testimony of almost all Asiatic conquerors cannot well be ignored. How often the neighbouring states have contended for its possession is proved by the more than fifty sieges which it has had to endure. With the exception of Baboor, nearly all the great rulers of India, as well as of Central Asia, have placed much importance on it. To the present moment it forms an apple of discord between Persia and Afghanistan; and in the not very distant future it will do the same between England and Russia. We take it that Sir Henry Rawlinson was not far wrong when he declared that he would "rather give up all the rest of Afghanistan than that Herât should fall into the hands of Russia," and from Merv to Herât is but one step more.

FAUST ON THE STAGE.

WHAT are the learned gentlemen about who dissolve all stories into still less credible myths? They have dissolved William Tell until there is not an atom of residuum in his legend. Mermaids have been converted into sun-gods, and heroes vanish into whirlwinds and hurricanes; but Faust remains. In all its earlier forms the Faust story is but one version of the witch and warlock superstition, in which seems to have been involved a compact with the Evil One. During life the witch or wizard was endowed with miraculous powers, on condition that the soul after death was surrendered unconditionally to the powers of darkness. There is a kind of shadowing forth of this idea even in the *Festin de Pierre* of Molière, one of the first forms of *Don Juan*. There is a compact of a sort. The Dou invites the Commander to supper, and is carried off after the feast. In various forms this story of Fortunatus finally lost is apparent in history and poetry: Merlin is shut up in the enchanted tree; Frederic Barbarossa is sitting in the mountain, with his beard grown through the table—in both cases the penalty of success during a lifetime. Faust is more modern than Friar Bacon of the Brazen Head, and, so far as the chronology of any of such stories can be ascertained, is not older than the latter part of the fifteenth century. This date has given some colour to the opinion that the Faust legend is altogether modern, that his name should be

written Fust, and that he, with Gutemberg, Schoeffer, and probably a few more, invented printing. Fust, it is said, took his first books with him to Paris, sold them as manuscripts, and explained their exact similarity by asserting that he had learned the secret from the devil. If Fust, as some authorities hold, died of the plague while in Paris, there may be groundwork in the story, but it is evidently rather an application of old matter than a brand-new invention. The story of the man who barters his soul for enjoyment is a form of the Eastern tales of the genii who did important services for the persons to whom they were attached. The idea of sacrificing the future of the soul is probably the Christian addition to the legend, which found its latest expression in the Doctor Faustus, or the Lucky One, of German story. In all its variations the localities of this Faust are strictly preserved. According to the old popular story, Faust was born in the fifteenth century, and studied first at Ingoldstadt and then at Wittenberg. He knew everything, and studied every 'ology; he came unexpectedly into money, and unwonted wealth kindled in him unholy desires, until he summoned the powers of darkness under the form of Mephistopheles, and made an agreement by which he ensured to himself life and power for twenty-four years; at the expiration of which term his soul was to be paid as purchase money. His servant was one Wagner, his dog was named Prestigiarus—a suspicious name, but there is no Marguerite in this old story. Let us seek as we will, the old story of Faust is not—on paper, at least—older than our own Christopher Marlowe. The Life of Faust is said to have been written in German by one George Wiedman, of Hamburg, in 1593, and to have been translated into French in 1674, but as these works place the death of their hero about 1545, Marlowe's tragedy remains the authority nearest to the date of the doctor's final surrender of himself to the arch enemy. Marlowe died in 1593, and must, therefore, have written his tragedy while the story of Faustus was fresh and green, and long before Germany possessed even the early beginnings of the youngest European literature. Marlowe, whose "mighty line" and reckless life proclaim him a poetic kind of Faustus, died young of a wound received in a brawl at Deptford, after having acted as the herald of Shakespeare. This dull and chronologic fact should never be forgotten.

in comparing the two poets. Marlowe died in or about the year that Shakespeare came to London, and as an actor and playwright has at least the merit of restoring blank verse to the English language.

The *Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* is then the earliest literary work extant purporting to treat of the Wittenberg savant and conjuror—terms almost synonymous in the age in which he lived. To the average mind of the fifteenth century, astronomy and astrology, chemistry and alchemy, signified exactly the same thing; in fact, our prosaic and matter-of-fact ancestors cared very much more for the arts of divination, the transmutation of metals, and the secret of perpetual youth, than for any abstract idea of science. What may be called the poetry of science, the love of knowledge for its own sake, is a recent invention, like the love of picturesque scenery, and the arts of spelling accurately, and speaking decently and modestly. Some of these last are not very widely distributed even now, any more than a knowledge of the difference between science and quackery. In queer lower strata lurk "survivals" of the thoughts and customs of centuries long gone by, changed a little as to outward form and expression, but in essentials just as of old. There are thousands of people now in England who know no more difference between astronomy and astrology than their ancestors of four hundred years ago. White witches are yet to be found in Devonshire, and gipsies everywhere that a silver spoon is to be picked up. More than this, the present Astronomer Royal, like Flamsteed, who lived a century and a half before him, is besieged with requests to find lost linen and spoons, to "take the stars off" a favourite son who has a strange knack of losing his watch when he goes to market, to "fix the planets" for a pet daughter, or to find the whereabouts of stolen property. A yearly average arrives at the Observatory at Greenwich of letters containing droll requests of this kind, proving that vulgar human nature is profoundly penetrated with the wisdom of Buckle's apothegm that "the chief use of knowledge of the past is to predict the future." In a rough kind of way these good people agree with the philosopher, albeit they import the revelations of the planets into their calculations. In Marlowe's time nobody doubted his own star for an instant. During the lifetime of the English poet, the greatest living woman saving Elizabeth

herself, Catherine de Medicis, spent a part of every day with Ruggieri, her necromancer, in the tower since built into the wall of the Paris corn-market, or in his loftier observatory at Blois. It was in the latter that the Italian juggler cast the horoscope of Henry of Navarre, and found that he would reign in France; a prediction which absolutely drew away the queen from the Huguenots, the natural allies of the monarchy against the overweening Guises, backed by Spain and the Pope. It was, therefore, not astonishing that the world should have a lively sense of the personal presence of Lucifer, at the time Kit Marlowe tippled sack at Deptford. Honest Kit himself never doubted the personality of angel or devil. He presents us with the personality of Tamburlaine the Great, after the fashion caricatured by Shakespeare, and gives us Doctor Faustus in all good faith, without sceptical reservation, cold realism, or metaphysical abstraction. To Marlowe Faustus is an entity—a genuine living man, as unlike Goethe's Faust as may be; a real personage, making a real compact with a real devil, and paying the penalty with body and soul. In reading Marlowe's remarkable work it is impossible to imagine that the author doubted the possibility of the events he puts before the spectator. This simple faith gives a genuineness to the *Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, that one is far from finding in the great work of Goethe. Marlowe's work is the outcome of an undoubting mind—not the statement of a great problem yet unsolved. After the old simple fashion, Marlowe points his moral before he begins to adorn his tale, and tells us, through the medium of the chorus, how Faustus is

graced with Doctor's name,
Excelling all, and sweetly can dispute
In the heavenly matters of theology :
Till swoln with cunning, and a self-conceit,
His waxen wings did mount above his reach,

and so "surfeits on the cursed necromancy." Marlowe wrote, as Goethe could not write, in the firm belief of the possibility of what he wrote. Goethe's earth and air spirits are abstractions; Marlowe's are concrete actualities, and throughout the Englishman's wonderful play there is no hint, any more than there is in a mediæval mystery, that the events in it are either impossible or even improbable. There is another curious point of difference; not with the last thought of Goethe in the second part of *Faust*, but in the first or dramatic part—a difference clearly

ascribable to the fervent religious faith of the sixteenth century. Throughout Marlowe's play there is the constant interposition of good counsel and warning to repentance. Faustus signs the contract, but it is throughout suggested that it might have been annulled had he turned back in time; the Christian doctrine of repentance is never forgotten, and Faustus is constantly opened a loophole of escape.

Weary of success as a learned doctor, he asks:

Are not thy bills hung up as monuments,
Whereby whole cities have escaped the plague,
And thousand desperate maladies been cured?

Human knowledge being compassed, he aspires to the supernatural, and accordingly calls in two doctors learned in the art magical, "the German Valdes," whose name hath a most un-Teutonic sound, and Cornelius. These worthies instruct him how to use the works of Bacon and Albertus Magnus, in conjunction with the Hebrew Psalter and New Testament, so as to raise spirits more potent than those whom Owen Glendower (testo Hotspur) called in vain. His interview with Mephistopheles is marked by several peculiarities, notably one not overlooked by Milton :

FAUST. Where are you damned?

MEPH. In hell.

FAUST. How comes it then that thou art out of hell?

MEPH. Why, this is hell, nor am I out of it;
Think'st thou that I, that saw the face of God
And tasted the eternal joys of Heaven,
Am not tormented with ten thousand hells
In being deprived of everlasting bliss?

This Mephistopheles is not the mocking fiend of Goethe, but rather the awful Lucifer of Milton. He is determined to secure the soul of Faustus, and during his twenty-four years of service realises every kind of impossibility for his temporary master. Some persistence on the part of the fiend is required, for Marlowe's Faustus is a shabby client, ever trying to escape performance of his bond. This is not astonishing when the spirit of the age is taken into consideration. The mystic and comprehensive answer to Where is hell?

Hell hath no limits, nor is circumscribed
In one self place: but where we are is hell,
And where hell is there must we ever be,

must not be understood too literally. Nothing would have been farther from Marlowe's purpose than to shake popular belief in an actual fixed place of eternal punishment. Firstly, such doctrine would have been utterly opposed to the theology of his day; secondly, it would have made an end of his tragedy. The reality of the

infernal regions is as necessary to Marlowe as to Dante. Neither doubted their existence, while, on the other hand, Goethe held what are called "advanced views" on such subjects, and, whether he chose openly to avow his disbelief in eternal punishment or not, treats his angels and spirits in Faust as mere poetical machinery, just as Julius Caesar, according to Sallust, treated the old Pagan gods in that memorable speech in the senate house, touching the conspiracy of Catiline. There is no real good or evil spirit in Goethe's wonderful work, and the malicious Mephistopheles is rather recollects as a sayer of good things than as a malignant fiend. Now Marlowe, on the contrary, is very real. Not only is Faustus duly handed over to the foul fiend at the conclusion of the tragedy, but a perpetual conflict is maintained between his good and bad angels. He is warned over and over again, and it is implied that even such contract as he has signed with Lucifer may be voided by prompt renunciation and repentance. He is shown, within the compass of eight days, the face of heaven, of earth, and of hell. The seven deadly sins appear before him, and describe their attributes; he is given every chance of repentance in vain. Yet he is not shown to be oppressed by the Greek destiny. On the contrary, his power to decide is assumed by the frequency of the appeals made to him. He is vanquished by one weakness—sensuality. In the last act an old man conjures him to

leave this damned art,
This magic, that will charm thy soul to hell,
And quite bereave thee of salvation.
Though thou has now offended like a man,
Do not persevere in it like a devil.

This appeal is set aside easily by Mephistopheles, who promises Faustus, not Gretchen, a simple maiden, but Helen of Troy, and shows her to him. Faustus yields at once, exclaiming:

Was this the face that launched a thousand ships,
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium!

On the authority of Crabb Robinson's Diary, we know that Goethe, on being asked his opinion of Marlowe's Faustus, "burst out with an exclamation of praise: How greatly it is all planned! He had thought of translating it. He was fully aware that Shakespeare did not stand alone." There is, indeed, in the Elizabethan work a directness of purpose which lends it force and coherence. Only once does Marlowe descend to the buffoonery considered in his, and, for that matter, in later times, necessary to tickle

the ears of the groundlings. This is in the Roman scene, so written as to be suitable to the appreciation of an English audience in the latter quarter of the sixteenth century. It must be recollected that at that period a difference in creed did not signify merely a difference of opinion. It signified life and death. About the time when Faustus was enacted for the first time England was engaged in a death-grapple with Spain. Within a year or two of its production the Invincible Armada set sail for England, to bring the rebellious islanders back to the fold of Mother Church. The blood shed on St. Bartholomew's day still cried aloud for vengeance. On every side Puritan and Catholic stood sword—and, it may be added, dagger, pistol, and poison—in hand. The massacres of Alva were not forgotten any more than the more recent assassination of William the Silent. Jacques Clement was sharpening his knife, and Henry of Navarre was shortly about to confess that Paris "was worth a mass." It was natural that Puritan England should look upon all this, not as the outcome of the "ruthless renaissance," but of the perversity of the bishop of Rome, and it was therefore Marlowe's cue to hold the pope up to derision and contempt. Wherefore a great part of the third act of the Tragical History is devoted to the adventures of Faust and Mephistopheles at Rome, in the course of which the latter develops many of the peculiarities of the comic devil of the middle ages, delighting in tricks and transformations. Faustus and Mephistopheles have seen earth, heaven, and hell; have

Past with delight the stately town of Trier,
and

rich Campania;

Whose buildings fair and gorgeous to the eye,
The streets straight forth, and paved with finest
brick,
Quarter the town in four equivalents;
There saw we learned Maro's golden tomb,
The way he cut, an English mile in length,
Through a rock of stone in one night's space.

and other real and apocryphal wonders. On their arrival in Rome the demon acts as cicerone, and describes the Rome of the sixteenth century, but Faustus burns to show the "proud pope" his cunning. Mephistopheles advises:

Let it be so, my Faustus; but first stay,
And view their triumphs as they pass this way;
And then devise what best contents thy mind,
By cunning in thine art to cross the pope,
Or dash the pride of his solemnity;
To make his monks and abbots stand like apes,
And point like antics at his triple crown;
To beat the beads about the friars' pates;

Or clap huge horns upon the cardinals' heads;
Or any villany thou canst devise,
And I'll perform it, Faustus; hark! they come;
This day shall make thee be admired in Rome.

This is followed by a kind of burlesque scene, in which pope and cardinals are made to cut a sorry figure, doubtless to the great delight of the worthy Britons who gazed upon it about the year 1588. Saving this Roman interlude, and a somewhat similar scene at the court of the Emperor of Germany, The Tragical History is free from irrelevant matter, an exceeding merit; but it also has the defect—the, as practice has shown, irreparable defect—of wanting in love interest. Helen of Troy, who only appears in one scene, is a poor substitute for Marguerite. It is, however, probable that the want of love interest was not sorely felt by pre-Shakespearian audiences. When Marlowe wrote, the English drama and language were only crystallising into form, and audiences accustomed to the old miracle-plays would not prove severe critics. Indeed, if the longer and more impassioned speeches were curtailed, and the buffoonery reduced almost to bare pantomime, this wonderful play of Marlowe's would be as like a mediæval "Moralitie," as could well be imagined.

Marlowe's version of the story held its ground against all comers till Goethe's great work practically extinguished it. As several libraries full have been written concerning Goethe's Faust, it is not proposed to add in this place to the critical cairn which has been placed upon the grave of the Eagle of Weimar; sufficient to say that, despite the opinion of a clever playwright, Goethe's Faust is a very good stage-play so far as the first part is concerned. In the version played up to within a few years in Germany the author undoubtedly had had a hand; but it may not be denied that in other countries the Goethe version of the Faust story underwent some extraordinary modifications.

In 1825 the drama of Faustus, by Mr. George Soane, A.B., described as "author of Der Frieschütz, The Falls of the Clyde, Rob Roy, &c.," was produced at Drury Lane, Wallack playing the hero, Messrs. Terry and O'Smith that of Mephistopheles; Harley was the Wagner, Webster an Officer of the Inquisition, and Miss Stephens Adine, the heroine of Mr. Soane's version. This English Faustus of the year 1825 is a curious mixture of Marlowe's and Goethe's work, with a strong infusion of Der Frieschütz and Don Giovanni, cast in

the form of the romantic drama of the period; that is, intermingled with songs, duets, and choruses, but with spoken dialogue, somewhat after the fashion of the French *opéra comique*. The principal action of the piece occurs in Venice, and the peculiarity of the scheme is that Faustus has wronged Adine before the commencement of the first act. This lady is thus more like *Donna Anna* than *Gretchen*, and demeans herself generally as the forsaken but still loving woman. The love interest is thus suppressed almost entirely, and it is difficult to see the resemblance of the piece to Goethe's tragedy save that the brother of Adine is killed by Faustus instead of the Commander by Don Giovanni—another old story, by-the-way; old, centuries before Molière wrote the *Festin de Pierre*. Mr. Soane's *Faustus*, which was revived at Drury Lane in 1827, two years after its first appearance, is, in fact, one of those mysterious pieces which make us wonder at the patience which our grandfathers, judging from the experience of the writer, must have reserved entirely for the theatre. It contains only one passage in the slightest degree rejoiceful to the modern reader. It is considered necessary that Faustus should die from natural causes, and he is, therefore, made to plunge his hand into a thicket of wild roses. [MUSIC.—Faustus gathers the roses, and suddenly starts back with a loud cry—a serpent creeps from the bushes, and glides away, L.] Faust thereupon exclaims: "The fell tarantula! The bite is mortal." As the last scene takes place near Naples, it is of course proper, nay, praiseworthy, to throw in the tarantula with a view to local colour, but Mr. Soane, A.B., was obviously of the pre-scientific period to imagine that the tarantula is a snake.

Twenty-four years after the appearance of *Faustus*, according to Mr. Soane, a version of the story was written by Mr. Leman Rede, and Mrs. Keeley appeared as "the Devil." Neither mediæval *Faust* nor modern burlesque, this reading might almost be designated *The Comic Faust*. For the sake of introducing contemporary scenes, the greater part of the action is made to take place in modern London; but the opportunities thus afforded were missed by the author, who may be said to have written a one-part piece for Mrs. Keeley, and nothing more. In 1850 the best acting edition of *Faust*—save that approved, if not actually made, by Goethe—was produced at the Théâtre du Gymnase. It was

the work of M. Michel Carré, who without departing in any very important point from the general plot of Goethe, made the most of the lighter scenes, and especially of the character of Mephistopheles. The drama was entitled *Faust and Marguerite*, and was very strongly cast with Bressant as Faust, Lesueur as Mephistopheles, and the charming Madame Rose Chéri as Marguerite. It was very successful, and is the model of the libretto of Gounod's opera. The apotheosis of Marguerite created a great sensation in Paris, and the piece was imported by the late Mr. Charles Kean, who produced it at the Princess's Theatre, and played Mephistopheles himself with very great success. In 1866 yet another version from the pen of Mr. Bayle Bernard was produced at Drury Lane under the management of Mr. Chatterton. This was a fair honest attempt to put *Faust* upon the English stage in an acceptable and intelligible form. The dramatic strength of the situations accentuated by the French adapter were preserved, and at the same time the play was not cut down almost to the verge of pantomime, nor was Mephistopheles vulgarised into a pert and flippant snob. M. Michel Carré's Mephistopheles is an under-bred and second-rate, albeit humorous fiend, and as played by Mr. Charles Kean, with a limp as if from a cloven foot, verged upon the domain of low comedy. There was none of this in Mr. Bayle Bernard's version, which, on the other hand, if in unexceptionable taste, played slowly, and was generally voted dull. Yet a great deal was done to make it attractive. The illustrative music was selected from Spohr's opera of *Faust*, from Bishop's musical drama, from Mendelssohn's *Walpurgis Night*, and from the works of Haydn and Weber. The scenery was by Mr. William Beverley, and in costume and surroundings Retzsch's outlines were closely followed. Beyond all question this version of *Faust* was admirably played by Mr. Phelps as Mephistopheles, Mrs. Hermann Vezin as Marguerite, and Mrs. H. Vandenhoff as Martha. But the tirades were too long, the *Brocken Scene* unnecessary, and Mr. Bayle Bernard's *Faust* went the way of many other well-meant things. It is sad to be compelled to make such an admission, but there is no doubt that the beautiful scene of the apotheosis of Marguerite made the success of M. Michel Carré's version—of the English adaptation of a French piece adapted from the German, and saved the Drury Lane

version ; and it is a sorrowful triumph for music over the drama that when Faust is mentioned now, among ordinary English folk, the title is taken as referring to the opera. In Germany it is otherwise. The last acting edition in the original language is that of Müller, and makes a trilogy, or rather quadrilogy, of Goethe's great poem. To the patient Teuton the trilogy is possible, but in France, and still less in England, no such entertainment would be borne. Setting aside the "esprit frondeur"—the carping, sneering, ironical spirit now running riot in the theatre elsewhere—people have too much to do to be always at the theatre, and when they go there do not want to recollect what they heard the night before. There is therefore no fear of Müller's version or any translation of it invading the English stage. It is needless to add that Faust has been more than once burlesqued. Of the entirely new version of Faust attempted by Mr. Gilbert, upon which so much criticism has been expended, it may suffice to remark that the author seems to have narrowly missed, or to have abandoned at the last moment, the idea of working out the Faust story without supernatural machinery—that is to say, the only idea upon which a successful reconstruction of the play seems possible.

MY LAND OF BEULAH.

A STORY IN FIFTEEN CHAPTERS. CHAPTER XIV.

DURING the rest of that memorable morning Terence wandered disconsolately about Kensington Gardens.

At lunch, his reproachful countenance was a burden heavy to be borne—that is, to Royal, who declared he felt almost too guilty to lift his eyes from his plate.

"Am I growing grey, Nell?" said the delinquent as Terence departed; "if so, I hope it won't come in patches, but work its woeful change thoroughly at once."

My eyes followed the hand that was raised to his thick brown locks as he spoke.

"It is very much to Terence's credit that he has become so much attached to poor Pug in so comparatively short a time," said Aunt Idumea gravely; but, in spite of her sorrow at the loss of her favourite, she could not look stern for long that day.

Roy had carried out his avowed determination of taking her in his arms, and kissing her; indeed, it was after some such impulsive fashion that he had intimated to her the fact of our betrothal.

"I'm a quarrelsome old woman, and a silly old woman, but I'm not a blind old

woman," she had said, half between smiles and tears, "and I knew how it would be with you, children."

When she and I were alone together, she let me kneel at her knee, and tell of the sweetness of my joy. Most women naturally seek the sympathy of another woman in any great joy or great sorrow; for, let a man be as sympathetic as he may, and dearer than aught else the world holds, yet he cannot understand things in just the same way as a sister-woman can.

"I saw how it was, my dearie," said Aunt Ida, "but I made no sign; love that is still unspoken is like the leaf of the mimosa, that shrinks from even the tenderest touch. I shall not lose either of my children, shall I, because they have found out how dear they are to one another?"

For all answer I took her hand in mine, and laid my cheek against it lovingly. Then we were both silent, I kneeling by her still, and presently I saw the tears gather and glitter in her eyes.

"Child!" she said, smoothing back my still unruly locks from my forehead, "you found your Roy under the shadow of the trees where I lost mine."

We were both thinking of our dead: she of that first love, that every woman treasures as a sacred memory; I of the father whose voice could never now give a loving benediction to his little girl.

"Oh, how pleased he would have been! How he would have loved Roy!" I said, weeping; and auntie did not ask who I meant—she knew.

"We must not make each other sad, Nell," said auntie presently. "I shan't get much thanks from Roy when he comes for letting you make your bonny eyes red with tears. Oh, Nell, Nell! I'm glad you two found each other—but you needn't have lost poor Pug."

Happy love evolves a kind of vanity peculiar to that condition—a sort of overweening love of the approbation of the one, combined with a total indifference to that of the many. Has not the Laureate told us of the maid expectant of that lover who never came?

And thinking this will please him best
She takes a ribbon or a rose.

In like manner I stood before the long glass in my room that night, and entered upon the duties of the toilet with a sense of responsibility that had never over-shadowed me before. Roy was present to my mind in a threefold aspect. As a man, as a lover, and as an artist. As a man he would naturally be somewhat exigent, and like to

think one took some trouble to please his eyes ; as a lover he would be ready to overlook defects ; as an artist quick to detect them—ergo, let there be no defects to find ! Did ever any woman yet, when she is going to meet the man she loves, look in the mirror without a wish that Heaven had given her a richer dower of beauty than that which, with the new and sweet humility born of love, she is ready for the first time in her life to deprecate and under-rate ? I had not yet put aside my mourning. Yet I felt now as though papa would like me to make myself bright and pleasant for the eyes of Royal Drew to look upon, so I chose a long trailing dress of some diaphanous gauzy stuff, black, yet in its soft folds not without those lights and shadows artists love, and I finished it off at throat and wrists with white ruffles, made of some rare old lace, fine as a spider's web, that had belonged to my mother, and had escaped the cupidity of the owner of the Dorcas-basket. I felt almost satisfied with myself as I studied the effect in my glass. I had plaited my ample locks into a crown, worn high upon my head, and was about to adorn them with a bunch of small white roses that auntie had brought in from the conservatory, when all at once I called to mind something I had heard Roy say one day when we were at his studio : " If a woman has a well-shaped head, she had better leave it without any ornament save her hair ; flowers or feathers spoil its lines."

" Well remembered ! " thought I, with a smile. " If my head were broad at the top, or bulgy at the back, I should put in the roses ; but as I don't think it is either of those things—" And here the roses were fastened against the bosom of my dress. " Yes, that does nicely," I thought.

The day had been unusually warm for the time of year, and my window was still open, while compactly snoozing on the ledge was Tabitha, now rapidly developing into a sedate and discreet cat, who would have scorned to play with her tail or run after a cotton-bobbin. I have said that Tabitha was snoozing, but from that snooze I saw her suddenly rouse herself, lift herself stiffly up on all four legs, arch her back as high as its spinal vertebrae would permit, and swell her tail out to abnormal size.

I hurried to the window, and there was Royal coming up the garden path ; he was in evening dress, with a light overcoat, thrown back to save from damage the gardenia in his button-hole. For a moment my eyes refused to look any farther than the

flower, showing like a white star against his black attire. I knew he had remembered—when did he forget a fancy of mine ?—that I loved its rich sweet scent. But what was that following humbly at his heels ? Was it—could it be—Pug ?

Roy looked up, and seeing me at the window, doffed his hat. He looked so handsome, so winsome, standing there bareheaded, that for the moment, in the electric thrill of sweet triumphant joy that stirred my heart, I forgot all else.

Aunt Ida had gone to the breakfast-room, there to superintend the dinner of her restored favourite ; so, when I pushed the drawing-room door gently open, there was no one to be seen but a tall, slim, black figure, with a white star gleaming on its breast. Roy came forward to meet me, then putting his arm about me, drew me to his side, and by the look in his eyes I knew that the cloudy black dress, full of lights and shadows such as a painter loves, and the bunch of pure white roses, had not been donned in vain.

" Don't you think, Nell," he said, " that I deserve something for bringing that brute home again ? A nice time I've had with him, first and last, I can tell you."

" Yes," said I demurely ; " I think Aunt Ida ought to give you a kiss, like she did this morning ; it is the least that she can do."

" Don't you think it might be done by deputy ? " And the saucy blue eyes, looking into mine, gleamed with fun.

I shook my head. " I don't think those sort of things are nice second-hand," I said, with an air of conviction that must have been truly edifying.

Then, I don't know what came over me, but certainly some sudden change of mood : perhaps it was the sight of my lover, so winsome, so tender, such a manly chivalrous fellow, and all mine, my very own, that filled me with a happiness so keen as to be almost pain, I cannot tell : but all at once the tears rose to my eyes, and I laid my head upon his shoulder, and put my arm up about his neck.

" My love—my love," he said, as his lips sought mine ; and then we were both silent for awhile. Only for awhile, though, for there was something I wanted to say :

" I never thought, Roy, that anyone could be so happy as I have been to-day."

He only held me closer for this speech, and whispered, though there was no one to hear : " Since this morning, Nell ? "

" Yes ; since this morning. But, oh, Roy ! I wish, I wish that you had known papa.

I have been thinking of him all day long. I feel as if I needed his loving sympathy to make my happiness complete. Has Aunt Ida ever told you about him? Do you know how he died—all alone?"

I knew the tenderness and gentleness of which Royal Drew was capable; now I was to learn something of the stronger side of his character.

"Yes; she did tell me about it; but I am not going to let you talk about it now, Nell. You have had enough to try your nerves for one day; your little hand is cold in mine, and your dear eyes shine too brightly by far. Sit down in this cosy chair, and listen to my adventures—not 'in search of a wife,' like that persevering young man, Coolebs—but in search of poor Pug."

I had never seen Roy with this masterful manner on before; but I liked it, and did as he told me, with an inward conviction that to be tyrannised over with tender firmness was a most delightful experience for a woman who loved and trusted the tyrant with all her heart. However, the story of Pug's pursuit and capture was not to be told then, for Terence appeared to announce that dinner was ready. There was a restlessness in the old man's manner, and a trembling of the muscles round his mouth, that told of some strong though repressed excitement; and as Roy suddenly addressed him by name, he began to fidget with the handle of the door as an outlet for the spirit of unrest that possessed him.

"I hope," said Roy, stroking his beard—perhaps to hide a smile that was ready to break through his assumed gravity—"that you are quite convinced now, Terence, that I am no dog-stealer, and not to be held responsible for the pug's disappearance this morning?"

A flash of true Irish humour twinkled in the old man's eyes as he listened, and then, with a deprecatory glance at me, he gave a Roland for an Oliver.

"It was no fault of yours, Mr. Royal, at-all at-all, that the spalpeen of a dog took himself off, and set the mistress in a quandary. It's no dog-staler you are, sir, I know; but I'm thinking you're a big rogue of a thief, for all that, though it's not the beastis as you're after."

Roy, somewhat taken aback, stroked his beard, and said nothing, at which poor Terence grew frightened, and turned appealingly towards me.

"If you're thinking, sir, as I make too bold in speaking out what's in my heart,

ask Miss Ellen here if I haven't known her iver since she wore bits o' pink boots, with niver a sole to spake of to either of them, and had to be carried in my arms over the stones in the yard at Hazledene, to look at the big dog Roland; and 'Tirence,' she'd say—the cratur!—'he's very big, ain't he now?' And she'd grip me tight, and hide her face agen me shoulder. Aye, aye, Master Royal, I've some right to spake, sir, as have watched her like as you might watch a bit of a green sprout grow up into a proud and stately flower."

Roy's answer was to step up to Terence, and hold out his hand. As for me, I did not want to weep outright, so I sought safety in flight.

Altogether, the household was not a little disorganised that night, and dinner was kept waiting; a rare thing, indeed, with Aunt Ida, who prided herself on being the soul of punctuality. It was a merry meal, for Royal gave us a funny account of the finding of Pug, and more than once I saw Terence retire precipitately among the vegetable-dishes on the sideboard, to hide the fact that his old shoulders were shaking with suppressed laughter; while as to Aunt Idumea, the tears were rolling down her cheeks with laughing.

Her delight in Pug's adventures must have proved exhausting, for she fell asleep in the snugger after dinner, and Roy and I sat by the window, and were very careful not to disturb her; that is, we talked a great deal, but spoke very low, and sat as close to each other as possible, in order to be able to hear properly. My tongue seemed determined to make up for an unusual amount of silence during the day, and raced on like the water at the falls that glistened among the Cheshire hills, where lay my Land of Beulah. Indeed, it was all about that dear and well-remembered land that I chatted to Roy in the quiet of that happy evening. I told him about everything—even about the rooks. I told him about my dear Miss Mary, and said that "one of these days" I should take him to see the old home, and those that had made it so dear a place to me. I told him about the wood, with its lovely varied mosses; and about Polly, who came over the sea in a boat, and had such droll ways with her.

"And I suppose you had a school-friend, eh, Nell—after the general fashion of romantic young ladies—and you and she confided to each other mighty secrets about nothing, and wrote poetry to the moon?"

He was smoothing back my by this

time hopelessly disarranged locks as he spoke, and had that tender smile upon his lips that always reminded me of one whom I had "loved, and lost awhile."

"Everyone is silly once in their lives; I am no wiser than other people," I answered, catching my breath, and pulling to bits a rose that I had taken from the jardinière in the hall as I passed through.

"*Vanitas vanitatum—all is vanity, even school-friendships; is that it, Nell? Did my darling make an idol, only to find it clay? Well, well, such things will happen, child, as who knows better than I?*"

There was an uncomfortable silence after this, and then I felt Roy's restraining hand on mine, as he said: "But you needn't have pulled the poor rose to pieces, Nell. Flowers are never false friends; they give us all they can, their beauty and their perfume, and then—die. And that was such a beauty too! See, its petals are like red velvet." And he raised one of the fallen leaves in his hand.

"I'm sorry I spoilt it, Roy," I said humbly, "for I think I love the 'red, red roses' better even than the gardenias—now."

"And why 'now,' lady mine?" bending his tall head down to me.

"Because the first time I saw you, you had one in your button-hole. It looked so nice, Roy, against your velveteen coat."

And I get a kiss—a loving kiss, for an answer to this.

When yesterday is beautiful in retrospective, to-day perfect in possession, and to-morrow bright in anticipation, time does not run only, he flies; one thinks he should be depicted as a winged-god, not as an old man with an hour-glass, and a scythe to mow down and garner in the hours. I used to fall asleep with a smile on my lips, and wake with a smile there still. My prayers were fuller of praise and thankfulness than pleading; my whole life was one striving, not to seem all that was best and fairest to Royal, but to be all that could make his life complete and full of a perfect sympathy. The volumes on art that I read in those days would have made a library in themselves; the marvellous use I made of art terms astounded Royal and myself too, and my many blunders were a source of constant merriment to both of us.

And so the summer grew to fulness, and the London season with it. My passionate love for music had food enough, yet only "grew by what it fed on;" my love of art, and that new appreciation of

it that was born of love, made the art stores of London mines of content to me. Roy and I spent long and happy mornings wandering in the picture galleries; I listening with a proud humility to his criticisms on this or that painting, and subsequently making use of the knowledge thus gained to lay down the law to Aunt Ida's various friends.

One day, as we were returning from an expedition of this kind, Roy startled me by a sudden question.

"Do you never go to Hazledene, Nell?"

"No," I stammered; "I have never been—that is, I shouldn't care. Lady Vansittart rents it from papa's cousin, Vernon Dale. You know the property—that is, the land—was entailed."

"Yes, I understand; but are any of those things reasons why you should never visit your old home?"

"Well, no; but you see I don't get on very well with Lady Vansittart; and then Aunt Ida dislikes her; and so, altogether—"

With instinctive, well-bred delicacy, Roy saw that he had unearthed a family skeleton, and at once forbore to hunt the bony prey. I think he read the trouble in my face aright, and felt a conviction that papa's second marriage had not turned out very happily for his daughter. In truth, I had often wondered how I should speak of Eulalie to Royal. She had been my "idol;" and though I knew that idol to have been but clay, and long since it had fallen from its pedestal, shattered and dishonoured, still the remembrance of the old love made hard words pain; besides, she had been papa's wife, and he had loved her fondly—to the last, too, thinking that her absence from his bedside was forced upon her by the judgment of others, and not the result of her own pitiful cowardice.

How, then, should I speak of her?

Perhaps the stirring up of old troublous thoughts that resulted from Roy's words unstrung my nerves and excited my brain; I know not if this may have so been; but this I know, that on the night of that day the dream-child came to me again, its ragged clothing dropping from its shrunken limbs, its wee, white, weary face streaming with tears lifted to mine.

Next morning, when the maid called me, she told me that Aunt Ida had had a disturbed night, and was going to remain in bed until later in the day. To slip on my dressing-gown, and run, bare-footed as I

was, to her room, was the work of a few moments. I had often heard her boast that she was never a day in bed in her life; I could not even imagine her less brisk, less bright, less full of spirit than her usual self. But I found she was all three; her characteristic obstinacy being the one thing that had suffered no change or diminution. Her cheek was crimson with fever, her eyes were heavy, and she said she felt as if she were in a merry-go-round if she tried to sit up, but no living doctor would she consent to see!

When Royal arrived, early in the afternoon, I flew to him, and told him all my troubles; into which he fully entered, but considered any softening of the invalid's determination hopeless.

"If you sent for anyone, she would most likely order him out of the room," he said, kissing and consoling me as best he could, and then I spent an hour oscillating like a pendulum between the library and auntie's bedroom, having, at last, the comfort of seeing her sink into a quiet doze. Then, feeling more at ease, I gave myself up to the enjoyment of having Roy all to myself; and—why I hardly know, for he was not a person who had any sympathy with superstitious fancies—I told him all about the dream-child.

"What a fanciful, morbid child it is!" he said, when I had finished my story. Then he took the hand that lay nestling in his, and laid his lips against it, long and tenderly.

"And so my darling has been lying awake half the night imagining all sorts of evil things that are foreshadowed by this little miserable banshee of hers! Why, Nell, what could come between us now that we have each other?"

"Visitors," I put in quickly, turning his words into jest, because some secret foreboding in my heart girded against the assurance that they clothed.

For the hall bell rang at that moment, and we heard Terence hurrying to answer the summons.

"Confound—" began Roy, but I put my hand on his mouth, and laughingly bade him be a good boy and take things easy.

"It's all very fine," he said, as soon as I let him speak, and then—

Terence, white and scared as though he, too, had been visited by a banshee, threw open the door, and a tall and graceful woman glided in, her silk robes rustling on the floor.

In my amaze the old familiar name rose to my lips.

"Eulalie!" I cried, as Terence closed the door. Then I said no more; for another voice—Roy's, my lover's—had echoed the cry of mine.

"Eulalie!"

And the answer came as quickly.

"Roy, oh, Roy!" while she, my one-time friend, sprang to my lover's side.

I looked wildly from the one to the other. Roy's face was white; even his lips showed pallid through his beard; and his eyes—those dear blue eyes that were my heaven—met hers in a fixed gaze.

As to Eulalie, in all the falseness of her life one thing had been real, and that was the love that now transfigured her beauty into something hardly of this earth—the love that shone in the dark eyes that looked on Royal with the rapture with which some saint of old may have gazed upon a heaven-sent vision. Her hands were pressed against her breast, as if she strove to press down the tumult of feeling that shook her as the wind shakes the sapling. She saw nothing save Royal; heard nothing save the sound of her own name, uttered more than once under his breath as he stood there, turned as it were to stone by the sight of the woman for love of whom he had once been "mad." One more look at Roy, one more glance at the lovely image of passion that confronted him, and I had fled from the room.

As I closed the door I heard a sob.

But it was not from my own lips—they were set too hard together above my clenched teeth to let a sob find way.

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30	2 1 6	2 15 4	40	2 14 9	3 7 5	50	4 1 7	4 12 1

Note The Rates for other ages, or limited to other periods (as 7 or 14), may be had on application.

THE 41st ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING was held on 26th March.

THE NEW BUSINESS reported was—1776 Policies for £1,035,102, with £35,129 of Premiums. The Total Receipts in the year, including Interest, were £494,310; while the Expenses of Management were 10·57 per cent of the Premium Income, or 7·53 of the gross Receipts.

The REALISED FUNDS at 31st December 1878 were £3,379,421, having increased in the year by £277,522, a larger sum than has yet been reported by any Office in the Kingdom.

The REPORT further stated that, "Having regard to the general depreciation of Securities, which has resulted from the severe commercial crisis through which the country has passed, the Directors considered it would be expedient, and satisfactory to the Members, that at this time a thorough examination should be made of all the Securities;" and after a careful and exhaustive examination, the Committee reported that all the Loans were properly vouched, the Securities in complete order, and the Investments in a sound and satisfactory condition.

Copies of the REPORT, with full STATEMENTS of PRINCIPLES, may now be had.

EDINBURGH, June 1879.

JAMES WATSON, Manager.

The Scottish Provident Institution.

EXTRACT FROM "THE REVIEW" OF 16TH APRIL 1879.

THE SCOTTISH PROVIDENT INSTITUTION is a remarkable illustration of the success of sound principles, backed up by unflagging energy. The field of life assurance is not so very large that the identity of any one single Office of magnitude can at any time be obscured, but we venture to say that were it ten times as large, the personality of the Scottish Provident would make itself conspicuously felt. It has laid itself out for a distinct class of business, and, we are bound to admit, has got it. Its transactions have gone on increasing until it may fairly claim that it is the coming Scottish office. Of all the Scottish offices there are only two even now which have larger funds than the Scottish Provident. One of these was founded in 1815, and the other in 1825, whilst the Scottish Provident was not founded until 1837.

The special line taken by this Institution is, that it gives the maximum amount of *present* insurance for the minimum amount which may be safely accepted as premiums, and it fortifies this position by working its business at a very low rate of expenditure. The present rate of outgo in the way of management expenses and commission is at the exceptionally low figure of about ten per cent on the premiums and seven per cent on the gross income. The maximum amount of net assurances being secured at the lowest rate to assurers, the question of the division of profits is settled in a most equitable manner. Those who by their early death cause a loss to the common fund, receive the exact amount of their policy, whilst those who live longer, and who have to make up for the losses caused by the shortlived policyholders, have this loss minimised by the distribution amongst them of all the surplus that may be earned.

That this surplus may be a very considerable one is beyond all question, in spite of the low premiums charged. The surplus is earned in two ways. First, by the very low rate of expenditure of the Institution; second, by the gain on interest beyond the estimated rate, which has been fully a half per cent free of income-tax. This upon three millions yields a very handsome sum. The additions to the policies are further increased by the reservation of all the surplus for the long livers. The result has been, that a few policies effected on the low scale of premiums charged by the Institution have now been actually doubled, and some policies ranking under even the first division of profits have

been increased from twenty to thirty per cent in value. The popularity of the plans, and the deep root they have taken amongst the reflective class of intending assurers can best be illustrated by the fact, that the office, although amongst ninety-two British offices it ranks forty-eighth in age, has yet, in point of accumulated funds, risen to the eighth place; and further has, during 1878, added above £277,000 sterling to its funds, after paying nearly £200,000 in claims and annuities.¹

A further illustration of the rapid manner in which the Scottish Provident is making headway was given in a recent number of this Journal, in which it was shown that out of about a hundred offices there was only one which has made a greater increase to its funds during the eight years 1870-77. This single office was founded twenty-two years before its vigorous rival, which may not be without hope of overtaking even this formidable opponent within a reasonable limit of time. There can be no question as to which of the plans is the more attractive to the ordinary insurer; and the greater the knowledge of the public on the subject, the greater the tendency to select offices which offer the greatest advantages to all sections of society. Whether the life be long or short, all must feel satisfied under the Scottish Provident system; for although all may be in equal health at starting, yet changes soon begin to appear.

A man who dies before his premiums and interest equal the amount to be received by his family has made an actual profit out of the office. Those who live beyond this point get *all* the excess of payments back again, and thus both classes are satisfied. To all the system is economical, whilst the safety and solidity of the Institution are beyond all question. It is gratifying to observe that the commercial depression of 1878 has but slightly affected the Scottish Provident, which still keeps its million of new business; and it is further of advantage to know that the Board of Directors have specially overhauled all the securities and books, and have found everything, as was to be expected, in the most perfect order. It does not do in these days to rely exclusively on reputations; but there are some which, like that of the Scottish Provident, the more they are rubbed the brighter they shine. . . . The statements of the Board, and the accounts are, as usual, lucid and interesting, and will well repay perusal.

[Since 1st January 1870, when the first official statement of accounts was made to the Board of Trade, the Funds of the Institution have increased by £1,700,000.]

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